

A Plan To Curb House Sizes

Council Member
To Introduce Bill
In Montgomery

By MIRANDA S. SRIVACK
Washington Post Staff Writer

Montgomery County Council member Roger Berliner said yesterday that he hopes to limit construction of single-family houses of the kind whose height and bulk have roiled the close-in Washington suburbs.

Berliner (D-Potomac-Bethesda), whose district has become ground zero for tear-downs and McMansions, plans to introduce a bill that would change the method of calculating maximum house size to take into account the size of the lot. The result could be marginally smaller houses, he said.

Under his proposal, which he began circulating to his colleagues late yesterday, the maximum size of a house on a 6,000-square-foot lot, a common size in his district, would be 4,750 square feet, down from the 5,150 currently allowed under local zoning.

"Some will say that is too big a bite; others will say we can do more," he said, as he explained the graduated system for determining a house's size based on the amount of land it occupies.

"All homes should be sized on the basis of the lot. Proportionality will now be our key principle going forward," he said.

Berliner also proposed requiring that neighbors be given additional notice of plans to build an "infill" house, even though there are few legal tools available to block such houses. He did not propose any new ways to resist infill development, but his proposal would require builders to examine neighborhood guidelines, which are usually nonbinding, in communities that have adopted them.

Berliner unveiled his plans after

CONT.